

# THE GREAT WAX-WORK MYSTERY!

(An Amazing Episode in the Career of Herlock Sholmes, the World's Worst Detective, recorded by his faithful friend, Dr. Jotson.)

"PERSON to see you, sir." Mrs. Spudson, our landlady, put her head into the consulting-room and made that announcement with a pronounced sniff. From her remark and the tone of it, Herlock Sholmes, with his usual perspicacity, deduced that a lady had called.

"Show her up, Mrs. Spudson, please." Our landlady withdrew, and two minutes later reappeared with a large, red-faced, perspiring, puffing woman in tow.

Mrs. Spudson gave another sniff, and closing the door behind her, left the visitor panting like a stranded grampus in the consulting-room.

"Good afternoon, Mrs. Wudger!" said Herlock Sholmes, rising and doubling himself up like a penknife.

The lady gave an extra-loud snort which sounded like the effort of a hunted hippopotamus upon being punctured by an arrow.

"B-bless me, Mr. Sholmes!" she panted. "You know me?"

"I have never had the pleasure of your acquaintance before to-day, madam," said Sholmes politely. "But it was easy for me to recognise that you were the Mrs. Wilhelmina Wudger, who is proprietress of the waxworks in the Charing Cross Road. Odd bits of coloured wax adhering to your hands and the lobes of your ears made the recognition a matter of merely simple deduction."

"Wonderful!" I exclaimed.

"It is nothing to what I can do, as you know, my dear Jotson," said Sholmes modestly. "But pray be seated, Mrs. Wudger, and state the reason for your call here to-day."

Mrs. Wilhelmina Wudger broke the last spring of our armchair as she subsided into that article of furniture.

"Oh, it's dreadful, Mr. Sholmes!" she said, mopping her brow with the somewhat old-fashioned muff she carried. "Some of my best wax models have wilted away."

"Wilted away?" said Sholmes. "Pray be more explicit, madam."

"Well, it's like this, Mr. Sholmes," said our visitor. "I have a particularly fine lot of models in the Mixed Department. They are almost as good as the bunch down in the Chamber of Horrors. Among them I had some of the greatest politicians of the day."

"In the Chamber of Horrors?" said Sholmes keenly.

"No—in the Mixed Department. There was Lloyd George, Joe Beckett, and Jackie Coogan, Salmon and Gluckstein, Sam Slammer, Mr. Pickwick, Horatio Bottomley."

"Quite so, madam," put in Herlock Sholmes; "but we are drifting away from the point. Kindly explain the reason for the wilting away of these—ahem!—effigies of the great."

"Ah, that's just it, Mr. Sholmes! If I knew that, as like as not I shouldn't have called here to-day. I woke one morning to find that the face of Mr. Lloyd George had wilted. His forehead was all flopping down and his nose about six inches long. Looked more like Shylock than Lloyd George, he did!"

"I see," murmured Sholmes. "Something had happened to the face of his waxen image during the night."

"Yes, something had happened to it,"

affirmed Mrs. Wudger. "At first I suspected that that Lloyd George had been there himself and spoiled it. I wrote a letter to his secretary, I did, but I was assured that Mr. Lloyd George was in Wales at the time. Next Ramsay Macdonald went to rack and ruin."

"Ramsay Macdonald!" "As sure as my name's Wilhelmina Wudger! His whiskers had turned black, and his face had grown long."

"What did you do?" queried Sholmes.

"Well, the first thing I did was to go round to his house. In my experiences as a waxworks proprietress I have learned that some of these bigwigs don't feel too pleased with their effigies in my waxworks. I thought maybe Mr. Ramsay Macdonald had been having a little game. But his chauffeur assured me that Mr. Macdonald had been in bed and asleep all the previous night. The next night Joe Beckett and four other lads near him in the Mixed Department went west. You'd have thought that Joe had been hit by the fist of Georges Carpentier to have seen his face. Looked like a piece of pounded dough, it did. Half a dozen of my best waxworks absolutely spoiled! And the thing a perfect mystery!"

As the lady concluded her strange story, Herlock Sholmes rose from his seat.

"Come, get your hat, Jotson," he said. "We will accompany Mrs. Wudger to her waxworks." And he added in a whisper: "It will be a free show—a sort of combination of pleasure with business."

A penny bus ride brought us to Charing Cross Road. Mrs. Wudger let us in by the front door of her small house, which adjoined the waxworks proper. In the kitchen we found Inspector Pinkeye sharing a rabbit-pie with Veronica, the maid.

Hastily the inspector concealed a large portion of crust under his tunic as we entered the room, followed by Mrs. Wudger.

"M'mm, m'mm!" mumbled Pinkeye. "I just dropped in, hearing there was a mystery afoot," said he.

Sholmes laughed. "The mystery of the missing rabbit-pie, eh, Pinkeye?" said Sholmes jocularly. "But come with us. You may be useful."

Mrs. Wudger said nothing. She merely favoured Pinkeye and the maid with a stony stare. The mystery of other missing things, such as sausage-rolls, apple charlotte, and so forth, had become solved in her mind.

"That door leads through into the waxworks," said Mrs. Wudger, pointing to one in the passage.

Sholmes entered the room indicated and glanced alertly about him.

"I see there's a window broken here," he remarked.

"It was done yesterday, sir," said the maid. "I think the fellow who has been spoiling the lovely waxworks must have got in by this way."

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Wudger.

"We can soon test the matter," said Sholmes.

He took from his pocket a large magnifying-glass, and, bending low, examined the pieces of glass which lay scattered on the carpet. Rising, he gave his opinion.

"There is no mystery about this," said he. "One of the particles of glass clearly shows a mudstain. A muddy tennis-ball broke that window."

"Well, how the man gets in to spoil the lovely waxworks beats me," mumbled Veronica, the maid.

"Be quiet!" snapped Mrs. Wudger. "Go back and prepare tea, my girl. Mr. Sholmes and Dr. Jotson will take tea with me. You may show your tram-conductor friend the back door, Veronica."

When Sholmes had explained that Pink-eye was really an officer from Scotland Yard, Mrs. Wudger became more reconciled to his presence. Together they all entered the waxworks, which had been closed to the public since the last outrage.

Sure enough, in the Mixed Department, as Mrs. Wudger called it, a number of the effigies had been completely spoiled. Some of the faces had been so melted that they looked almost as though they had icicles suspended from their noses and chins.

After a glance at these, Sholmes, somewhat to the astonishment of Mrs. Wudger, asked to be shown to the Chamber of Horrors, situated in the basement of the building.

For half an hour we wandered among the effigies of the criminals. Sholmes was like a child with a new toy. He admired the features of one notorious character after another. He tinkered with the guillotine. He fondled the relics of the rock-cake by which the notorious Schlitzhanger had choked her seventh husband.

"Now," said Sholmes at last, rubbing his hands, "let us get to the business of the afternoon."

Together we all returned to the "Mixed Department."

"It looks to me," said Pinkeye, tugging his moustache, "as though the criminal who has spoiled these beautiful effigies has come to the place during the day."

"Ah! And remained hidden?" I said.

Inspector Pinkeye favoured me with a look of scorn.

"In a sense, yes, Dr. Jotson," he said. "What would be more simple for a person to adopt the role of a waxwork model? You would only have to strike a position and stand in an odd corner to be missed completely at shutting-up time."

Herlock Sholmes laughed lightly. "Ingenious, but hardly creditable, dear Pinkeye," he remarked. "See that?"

He pointed aloft. Directly above that portion of the Mixed Department where the outrages had taken place was a small skylight. It was not more than a foot square. Then it was Pinkeye's turn to laugh.

"Ho, ho! You don't think that the miscreant got through there, Mr. Sholmes?" he guffawed.

"No, my dear Pinkeye," said Sholmes. "As the old proverb says, there are more ways of killing a cat than by choking it with butter. I don't believe for a moment that the culprit ever set foot in the waxworks. Let us now take tea with Mrs. Wudger. With her permission, we will keep watch here to-night, and I think that I can capture the misguided rascal who spoils her excellent effigies."

As we were walking back to Mrs. Wudger's living-rooms, Solmes, who had been deep in thoughts, asked suddenly:

"By the way, Mrs. Wudger, have you an enemy?"

"An enemy?" said Mrs. Wudger. "Hundreds and hundreds of them! Every human being who is reproduced in that Mixed Department is an enemy of mine."

"Quite so," said Sholmes. "I meant a special enemy."

Mrs. Wudger shook her head.

After a good tea, to which we all did full justice, Sholmes, Inspector Pinkeye, and myself returned to Shaker Street together.

That night we went back to Charing Cross Road. By means of a key, which Mrs. Wudger had given Sholmes, we let ourselves into the waxworks, and made our way to the Mixed Department. It was an eerie sort of visit. I confess to a shiver as I made my way among those gaunt rows of politicians, prize-fighters, and other desperate characters.

From a corner Sholmes obtained a step-ladder which he had noticed during the previous visit. This he placed directly under the skylight. Mounting it, he took from his overcoat pocket a length of strong cord with a loop in the end. The loop he arranged about the skylight, attached the cord to the woodwork lightly by means of

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some little wire staples, which he pressed in with his thumbs.

Dismounting, Sholmes put the step-ladder back in its place, and, taking the long end of the cord, walked with it among the effigies.

"Listen!" said he. "If my theory is correct, the miscreant will crawl along the roof gutter to that skylight. I noticed to-day that it would be easy to reach the gutter from the next-door building. When we hear a sound, we three must remain perfectly motionless, so our quarry will not be scared away."

For nearly two hours we watched and waited. Then suddenly there was a scraping sound on the roof. Sholmes and Pinkeye, who were together, stiffened like sentinels on the approach of the major-general. I, who had walked a few yards to stretch my cramped limbs, also stopped, motionless. I was directly under the skylight. But I think it speaks well for my presence of mind that I did not even glance up.

A few seconds later I became aware of a small, dark object before my head. Next instant I let out an agonised howl.

"Yow-wow! Oo-er! Help! I'm scalded!"

A moment later there was another howl from the skylight, and something fell with a clatter at my feet.

"Got him!" cried the jubilant voice of Sholmes.

He had jerked the long cord, and the snapping of the little staples from the wax-work had caused the loop to close about the arm of a man that had been inserted in the skylight. While he himself held the end, Pinkeye ran out of the waxworks, loudly blowing his whistle.

Ladders were procured, and a ladder brought down through the roof by two burly constables and placed before Sholmes.

"Sam Slammer!" cried Sholmes. "It was as I expected!"

"Yes, it's me!" growled the prisoner! "And I'd do it again! I'll learn that old Mother Wudger to put me in a waxworks!"

"Remove the prisoner!" said Sholmes. "Pinkeye, take that dark lantern attached to the string with you. It will form valuable evidence."

As Sholmes and I made our way out of the building to rouse Mrs. Wudger and report the capture of the miscreant, my famous friend explained the whole extraordinary affair.

"As I suspected in the first place, Jotson," he said, "the destruction of these wax models was done out of revenge. At one time Sam Slammer was a noted election agent, but later he became a footpad and burglar. Naturally, having a sort of right to a place in the Chamber of Horrors, he considered it undignified, to say the least, to be included among the politicians. Very annoying to a gentleman of Slammer's ideals."

Out of revenge he started to destroy some of Mrs. Wudger's wax models. By lowering a lighted dark lantern through the skylight and dangling it near the face of an effigy, he was able to melt the wax by the heat of the lantern, and it was the hot lantern that burnt poor Jotson's face.

Slammer avoided destroying his own effigy probably with the hope in his mind that it might eventually be included in the Chamber of Horrors.

"Altogether, a sad case," concluded Sholmes, "and I'm not without a certain sympathy for Slammer. He'll get three months in gaol, and, probably in consideration of this fact, Mrs. Wudger will at last decide to put his effigy in the more respectable company in the basement, where an extra sixpence is charged for admission. And I think that you will agree with me, my dear Jotson, that Slammer has earned the honour!"

THE END.



I HAVE spent a very busy week, interviewing various people on the subject of their New Year resolutions. The first person I approached—not without inward quakings—was the Head of Greyfriars. "Pip-pip-please, sir," I stammered, terrified by his forbidding frown, "w-w-will you be g-g-good enough to tell me your New Year resolution?" "Yes!" thundered the Head. "My New Year resolution is to cane every boy who comes into my study asking frivolous questions!" I beat a prompt retreat before the Head had time to put his New Year resolution into effect!

IN the quad I ran into Dicky Nugent, the leading light of the fag fraternity. Producing my notebook, I demanded to know his New Year resolution. "I'm going to give up smoking," said Dicky. Rather a ridiculous resolution, considering Dicky never puts a cigarette to his innocent lips. But I presume he means that he's going to give up smoking herrings at the Common-room fire!

SKINNER of the Remove was inclined to be sarcastic on the subject of New Year resolutions. "I've made a resolution not to make a resolution," he said, in response to my query. So that's that! It's a pity Skinner can't make a few good resolutions. If ever a fellow needed to take himself in hand and make amends for past misdeeds, that fellow is Skinner!

BILLY BUNTER intends to be a model fellow in the New Year—the beau ideal of all that is best in British boyhood. "I'm an awfully decent fellow already," explained Bunter, "but I'm willing to admit that there's still room for improvement. I shall give up gorging, for one thing. I shall not listen at keyholes any more. I shall scorn sneaking and spying. I shall keep my hands from sticking and peeling—I mean, picking and stealing." In short, Bunter promises to become a paragon of all the virtues in 1925. Alas! Bunter's promises are like his favourite article of diet—piecrusts!

When I visited St. Jim's I had an amusing chat with Arthur Augustus D'Arcy concerning his New Year resolution. Gussy has resolved to cut down his wardrobe. "Instead of keepin' a gwoos of toppahs in stock, deah boy, I shall only keep a paltwy hundred!" he said. "An' I shall cut down my supplies of shirts an' socks an' neckties in the same mannah. In the past I have been wathah a dwess-worshippah, but I mean to turn ovah a new leaf in 1925." Good old Gussy!

How to Build An

## "ALL-WAVE CRYSTAL SET!"

See Next Week's Grand

### HOBBY SUPPLEMENT!

FATTY WYNN was in a rebellious mood when I met him. Unlike Billy Bunter, he is not going to give up gorging. His New Year maxim is going to be, "Eat More Grub!" If Fatty keeps this resolution he will probably go off pop by the end of the year!

TUBBY MUFFIN of Rookwood has made a curious resolution. He is resolved not to write any more for "Billy Bunter's Weekly" unless the Editor agrees to pay him at the rate of a shilling a word. I'm afraid Tubby will be unlucky. From what I know of Bunter's "generosity," Tubby will probably be paid at the rate of a shilling a mile! And he's hardly likely to write a mile of manuscript in the course of a year!

## MY NEW YEAR RESOLVE!

BY BILLY BUNTER.

MY dear loyal readers,  
And fond fellow-feeders,  
I've formed a New Year resolution.  
I made it just now,  
And I solemnly vow  
To put it in prompt execution.

No longer I'll stuff  
On doughnuts and duff,  
And gorge like a greedy young glutton.  
I mean to go steady,  
I've started already—  
Refused a fourth helping of mutton!

I wish to get thinner.  
I'll cut down my dinner  
From six hefty helpings to three.  
No meals before bed!  
I shall sample, instead,  
A supper tacked on to my tea!

I've finished with spying,  
And sneaking, and lying,  
And "tanners" I'll no longer borrow.  
However, I'm willing  
To borrow a shilling  
And promptly repay it to-morrow!

At Latin and Greek  
I'll slog every week,  
Until I'm a wonderful scholar.  
I'll work like a nigger  
With vim and with vigour,  
And numerous prizes I'll collar!

At footer I'll practise.  
At present, alas, 'tis  
A game which reveals me a duffer.  
But soon I'll excel,  
And play awfully well,  
And my frame will get tougher and tougher!

I'll work and I'll play  
In the true British way,  
And build up a strong constitution.  
So wish me good luck,  
And applaud my great luck  
In making this grand resolution!

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